

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNT #0446/01 1070757  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 160757Z APR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9515  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3890  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0103  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4505  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0372  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0327  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0383  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4099  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2373  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0411  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1044  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0073  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7370  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0208  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2427  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1111  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1786  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEWMFC/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000446

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [ELTN](#) [KISL](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#)  
SNAR, SOCI, AF, UZ  
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL CHIEF  
EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT IN  
AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. TASHKENT 441  
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 445

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On March 31, A/DAS, Ambassador, and DCM met with Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) Murat Ataev. Like FM Norov (septel) and Parliamentarian Tashmukhamedova (septel), Ataev greeted the U.S. side warmly and announced that the GOU's Ministries and the NSC are ready for a step-by-step, gradual renewal of cooperation with the United States. He said he understands the role and significance of Afghanistan and expressed concern about the progress the international community is making with NATO/ISAF. He stressed strengthening central and provincial government as the key to improving the situation there, which is in Uzbekistan's, as well as the rest of the world's, interest. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ataev said that counternarcotics is an area of concern and a priority for Uzbekistan, and that Uzbekistan will participate in related conferences with the OSCE in Tashkent, Bishkek, and Vienna. In response to A/DAS's question on the status of a Modalities and Information-Sharing Proposal on border security cooperation that the Embassy had submitted to the GOU in December, Ataev responded that this was still under consideration, but he believed there would be a positive outcome. He also said that the GOU will work directly with the U.S. Embassy on border security issues without intermediaries.

[1](#)3. (C) Ataev announced that the NSC gave the go-ahead to

Customs over the weekend to allow four trucks carrying goods overland to transit Uzbekistan to Manas Airbase in Kyrgyzstan. (Comment: A/DAS Spratlen and DCM raised the stuck shipment of CENTCOM construction materials with Customs officials while visiting the Alat border crossing point with Turkmenistan, 80 km from Bukhara, the day before. They were told that the Customs officials had no orders to admit the three trucks and allow them to transit Uzbekistan. They believed the trucks had returned to their country of destination. Subsequently, DAO learned that the Turkish truck drivers had indeed left the border area and the contractor had decided to try another route to Manas avoiding Uzbekistan. The long-awaited order from Tashkent to Alat to allow the trucks to transit had not reached Customs officials there in time. DAO and Embassy GSO spent hundreds of staff hours trying to get the green light from the GOU to admit the trucks and then, when it came, it was too late. This episode points to the need of a transit agreement with Uzbekistan for materiel bound for Afghanistan. End comment.)

14. (C) Ataev spoke at length about the international effort in Afghanistan, expressing concern that efforts to stabilize the country are failing due to a fragmented effort that does not adequately bolster weak central and provincial authority.

Ataev leaned forward, frequently gesturing and speaking passionately, warning that Afghans do not want to accept foreign values, and that conditions could worsen near the borders with Iran and Tajikistan. Ataev predicted further clashes in Kandahar. "The President of Afghanistan should take measures to get expatriate Afghans back," he continued, advising that they return from overseas to the central government and local administrations. He admitted that some

won't want to do this, and complained that provincial "leaders" in Afghanistan were just trying to serve the interests of their respective clans, and that some are former Mujahiddeen.

15. (C) Ataev added that there are former Mujahiddeen in the National Parliament. He advised that the international community not try to impose "alien values" on Afghanistan, but try to train the Afghans who will be running the country in 15-20 years. Ataev warned that local khans would just try to seize financial assistance provided to Afghanistan. The GOU is providing help to Afghanistan, he said. It is providing electricity and construction materials to Afghanistan, and is lowering prices for energy to help its southern neighbor further. Uzbekistan is ready to give what is necessary to its neighbors, he said.

16. (C) In response, A/DAS Spratlen said that the international effort to secure Afghanistan incorporated both military and reconstruction efforts on a broad international scale. The effort, through its provincial reconstruction teams and other efforts focused on a coordinated and comprehensive approach to building a stronger government in Kabul and the regions. While the road ahead was certainly difficult, there had been successes and would be more as the international effort becomes stronger through the work of the newly-appointed UN Coordinator of the Civilian effort, Mr. Kai Aide.

17. (C) On human rights and religious freedom, Ataev, echoing the arguments of the Committee on Religious Affairs, said that it is important to consider the mentality of communities in Uzbekistan. When a member of a community converts to another religion, other members of the community may not accept this, he explained, but the Ministry of Internal Affairs and special services are blamed for what happens to these converts. Ataev said that radical Islamists have been imported to Uzbekistan from Iran and Saudi Arabia under the guise of religious instructors. This can lead to explosive situations such as the terrorist bombings of 1999. He described several soft security threats such as trans-boundary water usage, trafficking, narcotics, and border disputes that could lead to unrest. Spratlen noted that it was important to distinguish between observant

behavior and extremism.

¶18. (C) Ataev asked that the United States give Uzbekistan and Central Asia time for reform, and pledged that Uzbekistan would achieve this. He said that he knows the State Department receives some of its information from human rights activists. Ataev said that he knows vehement human rights activists who want the immediate adoption of western values. He warned that a large proportion of these activists simply want the money from internationally-sponsored grants, and that some of them want to maintain their image as freedom-fighters. He said that it would take another generation before all of these reforms could be realized, and implied that Uzbekistan was concerned about the potential for unrest that could accompany reforms that were implemented too hastily. Ataev then expressed concern about Iran's efforts to consolidate its position in Tajikistan, and the desire of their "northern neighbor" (Russia) to control everything here.

¶19. (C) As the meeting came to an end, Ataev said that we should know that the GOU supports a normalization of mutually beneficial relations with the United States. Many other countries have not adopted similar laws on political parties and the abolition of the death penalty, he said. Spratlen thanked Ataev for his concerns about regional security and suggested that it was important for Uzbekistan to contribute to the international effort. On bilateral issues, she told Ataev that human rights progress was a priority for the U.S. and the international community. It was important to continue the dialogue, but action was also important.

Comment:

-----

¶10. (C) Ataev is a key official in Uzbekistan's security hierarchy. He served in the Soviet army in Afghanistan and participated in Uzbekistan's diplomatic efforts to help secure Afghanistan in the 1990s. Ataev served in the National Security Service between 1991 and 2004, and was Director of the Advanced School of Strategic Analysis and Prognosis between 2004 and 2005, and has been Secretary of the National Security Council since November 18, 2005. During the meeting, he seemed eager for Uzbekistan to reduce its diplomatic isolation, not least because of the consequences for the country if his fears about Afghanistan bear fruit. For that reason, he noted the current policy of permitting U.S. citizens affiliated with ISAF/NATO to transit the air bridge at Termez on a case-by-case basis. But, like his fellow interlocutors, he defended the nation's slow progress on human rights and democracy and its questionable policies on fighting extremism.

¶11. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/DAS Spratlen.  
NORLAND